

## **EARLY EDUCATION INITIATIVE GRANTS**

### **Information Related to the 2010-2011 Application Process**

#### **What is the Early Education Initiative Grant Program?**

The Early Education Initiative (EEI) grant program was established by the Vermont Legislature in 1987 to provide early education opportunities for three- and four-year-olds who are at-risk. The provisions of the law<sup>1</sup> that created this state funded grant program include: (1) prioritizing areas in the state with few opportunities for early education, (2) providing developmentally appropriate, experiential learning opportunities in home and/or group settings, (3) valuing parent involvement and input, and (4) developing programs that result from collaborations between school districts and community organizations.

#### **What are the priorities of EEI in the context of Act 62?**

EEI supports early education<sup>2</sup> for young children who are at-risk. Act 62, the Prekindergarten Education law, provides school districts the opportunity to offer prekindergarten education<sup>3</sup> to children between the ages of three and five by including these young children in their school census, and using Education Funds to cover the costs of contracting with community providers or directly operating a prekindergarten program.

In order for EEI to complement Act 62, the purpose of EEI now has been refined to focus on promoting the participation of at-risk children in publicly funded prekindergarten education programs. The specific priorities of EEI, in descending order, are:

1. Support the development of publicly funded prekindergarten in towns where prekindergarten education has not yet been established so that this opportunity may be afforded to resident at-risk three- and four-years-olds,
2. Provide early education opportunities to at-risk three-year-olds in districts that opt to offer universal prekindergarten education to four-year-olds since these three-year-olds may not be included in the school census,
3. Provide a safety net for at-risk children who are not selected through the random selection process required of districts that have received more requests for publicly funded prekindergarten education than their Act 62 cap or resources allow,
4. Support the provision of specific services to at-risk children and their families so that they may successfully participate in existing publicly funded prekindergarten programs, and
5. Provide funding so that districts implementing publicly funding prekindergarten programs and facing the prospect of needing to reduce their investments in early education are able to continue serving at-risk three- and four-year-olds and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> The law governing EEI is Ch. 133, T.16 § 4014; a copy is attached.

<sup>2</sup> “Early education” is the term used in the statute; hence it will be used here. It includes learning experiences provide in quality early care and education programs, and in quality Head Start programs.

<sup>3</sup> “Prekindergarten education” is the terms used in Act 62; it refers to developmentally appropriate early development and learning experiences based on Vermont’s Early Learning Standards. Although there are no differences between “early education” and “prekindergarten education”, the former will be used when referring specifically to EEI, and the latter will be used to refer to the programs funded by the state’s Education Fund.

## What is the definition of “at-risk” children?

Children who are considered to be “at-risk” include children who:

- Are developmentally delayed by at least 25% of their chronological age in one or more of the five developmental domains (such as language, socio-emotional development), but who are not eligible for Essential Early Education (EEE),
- Are from non-English speaking families or are English Language Learners,
- Are economically disadvantaged (at 185% of federal poverty guidelines),
- Have a history of abuse, neglect, or family violence,
- Are homeless or in a family that has unstable housing, or
- Are socially isolated.

## Who can apply for an EEI grant?

Community child care centers, registered family providers, school districts, supervisory unions, tax exempt organizations serving children and families, and public agencies such as Head Start and parent-child centers may be the lead agency for EEI grants. However, all proposals must be collaborative and developed by representatives from at least one school district (or supervisory union) and one community program. In cases where the lead agency is NOT a school district or a supervisory union, *the partnership must designate the school entity as the fiscal agent.*

## How can EEI funds be used, and how much can I request?

EEI grant funds may be used to pay tuition for eligible children to attend community early care and education programs, or may be used for salaries and benefits for direct service personnel (e.g., teachers, para-educators), food, supplies and materials, facilities (not to exceed 10% of grant), transportation, staff travel, parent support program, and professional development.

The range for EEI grant requests is \$10,000 to \$30,000. *Funding is contingent upon legislative approval.*

EEI funds may only be used for direct services to at-risk children and their families. Partnerships that would like to establish a new publicly funded prekindergarten program or expand their current program will need to complete a community needs assessment as

specified in Act 62. EEI funds may not be used for this purpose; however, grantees are encouraged to simultaneously apply to the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC) to fund the needs assessment and to provide prekindergarten education to children not eligible under EEI. Information on VCPC grants can be found at

<http://www.permanentfund.org/collaborations/vcpc.php>

## How do I apply for an EEI grant?

First, it is important for all prospective applicants to engage in discussions with individuals, schools, organizations and agencies within the community that provide and/or support early care and education. These discussions will help identify how the community could best utilize EEI funds to ensure children who are at-risk have access to early education.

Proposals must be submitted by a partnership of at least one community program and one school district. The fiscal agent must be the school district.

**ALL GRANT APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE TO BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY to [shirley.rawson@state.vt.us](mailto:shirley.rawson@state.vt.us)** You will receive an email acknowledging receipt of the Letter of Intent and the Grant Application.

**Letter of Intent:**

If your partnership plans on submitting an EEI grant proposal, please complete and email the attached *Letter of Intent form no later than JANUARY 29, 2010*. Please e-mail the Letter of Intent in either Word or as a PDF file to Shirley.

**EEI Grant Application:**

Carefully read and follow the attached guidelines for EEI Grant Applications. Please note that EEI grant applications consist of an abstract, a narrative that addresses all required sections, and a proposed budget. The abstract should not exceed one page, and may be single-spaced; the narrative should not exceed 10 typed, double-spaced pages. Supporting documentation should be kept at a minimum.

EEI applications should be emailed in either a Word, Excel (budget) or PDF format to Shirley *no later than MARCH 25, 2010*.

**Is any technical assistance available?**

Technical assistance will be available through several venues. Two interactive television sessions on the state's Learning Network of Vermont (LNV) will be scheduled for late January and early February. In addition, you may contact Shirley Rawson (828-5128) or Manuela Fonseca (828-3850 or by email: [manuela.fonseca@state.vt.us](mailto:manuela.fonseca@state.vt.us)) if you have any questions.

For technical assistance on creating/strengthening partnerships between child care and the public schools, please contact Mark Sustic and Sherry Carlson from **VCPC**. Contact: Mark at 802-849-6968 or [mrksustc@together.net](mailto:mrksustc@together.net).

## EARLY EDUCATION INITIATIVE GRANTS

### Application Guidelines

#### General Instructions:

EEI grants are awarded on a competitive basis; grantees are selected based upon the average number of points two independent reviewers assign to an application. The higher the number of points, the more likely the application will be funded.

EEI grant applications consist of four sections: (1) an abstract, (2) a narrative that describes the goals, design, and delivery system of the program and/or activities, (3) a description of the leadership, collaboration and coordination of the proposed program, and (4) a proposed budget. A description of each section, questions to help guide your response, and the number of points possible follow.

**FORMAT:** With the exception of the Abstract and Budget, all sections should be written double-spaced and use a 12-point font. The Abstract may be single-spaced. The entire application should not exceed 12 pages.

**SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION:** The application must be emailed to Shirley Rawson at [shirley.rawson@state.vt.us](mailto:shirley.rawson@state.vt.us). Applications may be sent as a PDF file, or as a Word file (the budget may be in Excel). If you'd like to send any attachments, please limit these and send them as Word or PDF files.

#### Required Sections of the Application:

##### ***Abstract*** (5 points)

Write a succinct one-page summary of who is involved in developing the proposal, what your program will look like, how many at-risk children you plan on serving, and why this program is needed. (Note: The abstract may be single-spaced.)

##### ***Program Narrative***

###### ☐ Introduction – 3 points

Briefly describe your partnership and other collaborators, the geographic areas to be served, and which priority area your proposal addresses (refer to the five priority areas specified at the end of these guidelines).

###### ☐ Need for the Program– 10 points

Why is an EEI grant needed? What information indicates that children who are at-risk do not have adequate access or opportunity for quality early educational experiences? Are there any publicly funded prekindergarten education programs? Do children who are at-risk in your community appear to be “slipping through the cracks”? Do you have estimates of the number of three to five year old children in your community who would be considered “at-risk” according to the EEI eligibility categories? What do kindergarten readiness data indicate about the children in your community? What are the rates of poverty and Medicaid eligibility for the families you are targeting? Does your community have any unique needs?

☐ Program Description – 20 points

What goals does your proposal seek to accomplish? How will your partnership go about doing that? How will children who are at-risk be identified and served through your proposed program? How many at-risk children, and in which at-risk categories, do you plan to serve on an annual basis?

Describe the delivery model(s) you propose using (e.g., center-based, outreach). How will you ensure that the early education opportunities are quality experiences? What will the opportunities you're providing for at-risk children look like? Who will be involved? How will you ensure that children who are at-risk are in inclusive environments and have opportunities to play with typically developing peers?

What efforts will be used to ensure curricula are aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards? How will the progress of children served by your proposed program be measured? How will program quality be assured? Will program staff participate in evidence-based professional development activities?

☐ Family Involvement – 15 points

How have families of young children who are at-risk been involved in the development of your proposal? How will they be included in the process for making decisions about the issues that affect the proposed program, and in evaluating the quality of the services? What specific opportunities or services will be provided to families whose children participate in your program?

***Collaboration and Coordination***

☐ Collaborative Development of the Proposal – 5 points

Describe the collaborative process that was used to generate this proposal. Which organizations, school districts, and/or community-based agencies have been actively involved in developing this proposal?

☐ Collaboration and Coordination in Implementing the Proposal – 10 points

Who are the co-leaders from the community program(s) and the school district or supervisory union? Describe the roles and responsibilities partners for the proposal will have. How will communication about the program be shared with collaborating partners? How will other providers (e.g., child care providers, Head Start) be involved? If publicly funded prekindergarten education is currently available in your target community, how will your efforts be coordinated in order to ensure services complement rather than compete with each other?

Who will be the fiscal agent for the program?

## ***Budget***

### ☐ **Budget Form – 7 points**

Complete the attached budget form; be certain to explain each line item. Include a brief description and amounts of any other funding sources that will be used to support your proposed program.

## **EEI PRIORITIES:**

Additional points may be earned for addressing one or more of the following EEI priorities. Please submit a one page summary of how your proposed program will address the priority or priorities you've selected.

1. Support the development of publicly funded prekindergarten in towns where prekindergarten education has not yet been established so that this opportunity may be afforded to resident at-risk three- and four-years-olds. **(20 points)**
2. Provide a safety net for at-risk children who are not selected through the random selection process required of districts that have received more requests for publicly funded prekindergarten education than their Act 62 cap or resources allow. **(15 points)**
3. Provide early education opportunities to at-risk three-year-olds in districts that opt to offer universal prekindergarten education to four-year-olds since these three-year-olds may not be included in the school census. **(15 points)**
4. Support the provision of specific services to at-risk children and their families so that they may successfully participate in existing publicly funded prekindergarten programs. **(8 points)**
5. Provide funding so that districts implementing publicly funded prekindergarten programs and facing the prospect of needing to reduce their investments in early education are able to continue serving at-risk three- and four-year-olds and their families. **(5 points)**

## **Important Dates to Remember:**

- ☐ January 29, 2010 – Letter of Intent to Submit an Application Due
- ☐ March 25, 2010 –EEI Grants Applications Due
- ☐ May 15, 2010 - Applicants notified of Grants Committee Decision
- ☐ July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011 - Grant Period

NOTE: VCPC grants are due March15, 2010. For more info go to <http://www.permanentfund.org/collaborations/vcpc.php>